DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 309 220 UD 026 882

AUTHOR	Kyle, Charles L.; And Others
TITLE	Lost! An Initial Study of the Magnitude of and Reasons for Early School Leavers from the Chicago Public Schools. A Report to Illinois Attorney General Neil F. Hartigan.
INSTITUTION	Loyola Univ., Chicago, Ill.
PUB DATE	Mar 89
NOTE	59p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Community Involvement; Dropout Attitudes; *Dropout Characteristics; Educational Policy; *Enrollment Rate; Enrollment Trends; *Grade 8; Grade 9; *High School Freshmen; High Schools; Interviews; Junior High Schools; *Out of School Youth; Student Records; Truancy; Urban Education
IDENTIFIERS	*Chicago Public Schools IL

ABSTRACT

Although the Illinois school attendance statute does not allow youth to drop out of school before the age of 16 years, many of the students listed as chronic truants are actually dropouts. Computer analyses of school records in the Chicago Public Schools were conducted to assess the number of eighth graders who never entered ninth grade. Later, interviews were conducted with members of a team of parents serving as voluntary deputy truant officers who visited the homes of these "lost" eighth graders. The interviews focused on the reasons these young people gave for quitting school before ninth grade, and the strategies that parents and community members used to encourage them to re-enter school. The study found that in 1987 more that 2,000 eighth graders were "lost." These dropout cases were not officially recorded or cited in school reports. The students, statistically, fell through the cracks since the elementary schools keep no records of their whereabouts after they have finished grade eight. Four tables illustrate these data. Abstracts of 25 related articles are included. (VM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

6-6-89

A Report To Illinois Attorney General Neil F. Hartigan

ED309220

LOST!

An Initial Study of the Magnitude of and Reasons for Early School Leavers from the Chicago Public Schools

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Charles Kyle
Loyola Univ. of Chicago
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

by

Charles L. Kyle, Ph.D.
Joyce Sween, Ph.D.

with the assistance of
Olga Vasquez

Faculty Urban Seminar
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY
March, 1989

UD 026 882

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A REPORT TO ILLINOIS ATTORNEY GENERAL NEIL F. HARTIGAN

LOST!

An Initial Study of the Magnitude of and Reasons for Early School Leavers from the Chicago Public Schools

by

Charles L. Kyle, Ph.D.

Joyce Sween, Ph.D.

with the assistance of
Olga Vasquez

Faculty Urban Seminar

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY

March, 1989

State of Illinois
Office of the Attorney General
Chicago 60601

Neil F. Hartigan
Attorney General

March 21, 1989

Dear Fellow Illinoisans:

I am pleased to be associated with this report. As the authors so eloquently document, the dimensions of the early school leaver problem for Chicago public education are quite grave. Coupled with earlier works and studies concerning secondary school dropouts, this report suggests the need for the State of Illinois to take steps to arrest the problem of students who leave school prior to even entering the high school system.

The children under study here are, indeed, "lost", having fallen through the cracks of the large Chicago public school system. These children are in addition to those officially reported as dropouts. We already know that half of Chicago's school children drop out, with the rates for minority students exceeding 60 percent. If we hope to expand employment opportunities and improve the quality of life for our citizens, particularly minorities, we must ensure that our children stay in school. I am committed to actions to find the "lost" children described in this study and, most importantly, encourage them to return to school.

There is an urgency with which we must pursue actions to resolve the problem of "lost" children and school dropouts, generally. As every day passes, more children leave school and are consigned to the unfortunate treadmill of unemployment, crime, pregnancy, and other social ills. The time for action has long passed, and we must commit ourselves to addressing the issues in this report.

Neil F. Hartigan
Attorney General

Dedication

to

Albert A. Raby

FREE, AT LAST!

November, 1988

Albert A. Raby grew up Chicago. His father died when he was a baby and he helped his mother care for four small children by shining shoes. Al began ditching school to sell newspapers in the fourth grade. After being confronted by his teacher for truancy, he was told by the teacher to bring his mother to school or not to return. He didn't return.

While only tens year old, Al spent a year on the streets playing pool and selling newspapers. Eventually, his brother convinced him to return to school. While in the eighth grade, Al Raby was told that he was going to be put back into the seventh grade. He cried out loud and left school - not to return for many years.

When Al was in the U.S. Army, he received a promotion to an office job but he was forced to give up this new job when he realized that he could not use a typewriter because he could not spell. This setback later provided the motivation for him to return to school. After being honorably discharged from the U.S. Army, Al Raby returned to school and earned grade school, high school, and college diplomas. He then became a teacher in the Chicago Public Schools.

Albert A. Raby's accomplishments have earned him legendary status in the civil rights movement in America. He led the campaign to end school segregation in Chicago. He brought Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to Chicago. He managed the sucessful political campaign of Mayor Harold Washington. He ably directed the Chicago Commission on Human Relations.

Al Raby was a tireless advocate of school reform.

This research is dedicated with love to this great man who, like many youth today, dropped out of grade school.

Executive Summary

===

According to Education Week (February 8, 1989), "the National Coalition for the Homeless last year estimated that there were between 500,000 and 750,000 school-age homeless nationwide, and that only 43% attended class regularly." In Illinois, there is no adequate mechanism for tracking these early school leavers.

===

The Illinois school attendance statute - which does not allow a school to permit a youth to drop out of school before his/her 16th birthday - has led school districts to record pre-sixteen (16) year olds who drop out of school as being "lost" rather than as being "dropouts." Since these chronic truants are not statistically identified as chronic truants or dropouts, no meaningful effort is made to develop programs to bring them back to a school environment.

===

There were 1,633 eighth grade graduates from the class of 1987 in the Chicago Public Schools who never attended class in a high school. After tracking these students for 15 months, it was also clear that they had not transferred to other schools. These grade school dropouts were not recorded as "dropouts" or "chronic truants" but were recorded as being "lost." This number (1,633) is equivalent to 54 full class rooms of students. These grade schoolers who never reached high school comprised 5.5% of the graduating class studied.

===

There were 2,794 students (the equivalent of 93 full classrooms of students) from the eighth grade graduating class of 1987 (N=29,578) of the Chicago Public Schools who dropped out of school between the end of eighth grade and the Spring of sophomore year. During that period of time, they were recorded as "lost" but not as "dropouts" since schools are not allowed to permit students to drop out before age 16. These "lost" students accounted for 9.5% of the eighth grade graduating class.

===

There are no adequate statistics available to indicate the extent of the problem of early school leavers from the private or parochial schools in Chicago since the necessary information for the compilation of dropouts rates is either not collected or not made available.

===

Four (Districts 6, 8, 4, and 5) of the five Chicago Public School Districts (Districts 6, 8, 13, 4, and 5) with the highest number of early school leavers had large enrollments of Hispanic students suggesting that this problem may be

more severe among Hispanic students.

====

Models are available of successful and innovative dropout prevention programs being used in other American cities.

Recommendations

1. Since the state definition of a dropout is based on a 'k' through '12' formula, all students should be be given identification numbers upon entrance into an Illinois school. They would then be tracked when they transfer to be sure they arrive. This tracking mechanism should pertain to private schools also.

2. The early school leavers (ESL) funds administered by the State Board of Education should be administered under the same division as dropout prevention funds. Since many young people leave school due to financial problems, ESL funded programs could help relieve this stress.

3. There is a need for more truant officers and the funding once again of the community representative program. The community representatives would perform attendance improvement tasks.

4. There is a need for a separate orientation week to high school for the incoming freshmen. This orientation would be attended by entering 9th graders only. It would be conducted one week before high school officially begins for the other students.

5. There is a need for remedial programs that are added on to the elementary school curriculum. Intervention for students with achievement problems in the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades can prevent these youths from dropping out early due to poor academic skills.

6. The Bureau of Dropout Prevention and the Office of Attendance Improvement at the Chicago Public Schools should be combined to increase effectiveness.

7. The Joint Legislative Task Force on Hispanic Student Dropouts should be reconvened in order to assess progress made in this area and to address the problem of students dropping out before they are 16 years of age.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The concern and committment of Illinois Attorney General Neil Hartigan and Deputy Attorney General Michael Hayes for "children in need" are the reasons that this study became a reality. We are very grateful to them. Special assistance was also received from Illinois Solicitor General Robert Ruiz, and Steve Henrickson, Burt Rivera, and Julie Glynn who are members of the Attorney General's staff.

Our appreciation is also offered to Dr. Manfred Byrd, General Superintendent of the Chicago Board of Education, Dr. Frank Gardner, President of Chicago Board of Education, Board Member Linda Coronado, Former Board Member George Munoz, Dr. Carole Perlman, Director of the Department of Research and Evaluation and Dr. William Rice, Director of Technical Services of the Chicago Public Schools for their gracious cooperation. A special thanks to Dr. William Rice and Mr. Ashen Karp for the very fine computer analysis of this problem.

We are grateful to Reverend Raymond Baumhart, S.J., President of Loyola University, and Dr. Ronald Walker, Senior Vice President and Dean of Faculities of Loyola University, Dr. Michael Bakalis, Dr. L. Arthur Safer, and Dr. Mel Heller from Loyola University School of Education for their help and encouragement.

Thanks also to Senate President Philip Pock, State Senators Miguel Del Valle, Arthur Berman, Richard Newhouse, William Marovitz, Aldo DeAngelis, Representative Woods Bowman, Roberto Rivera of Senator Del Valle's staff, William Filan and Gabriel Lopez of the House Democratic Staff, Mr. Tomas Sanabria of Network for Youth Services, Sister Nancy Murray of St. Sylvester Church, Judy Stevens and Nellie Buitran of the Chicago Commission on Human Relations, Sylvia Herrera, Chicago Park Commissioner, Ms. Aida Sanchez and Mr. Mervin Mendez of Aspira Inc. of Illinois, Mrs. Mirta Ramiriez, Drs. Isidro Lucas and Rodolfo Garcia of Chicago City Colleges, and Mr. Joseph Rosen who have been very supportive. Their assistance has been deeply appreciated.

Personal thanks are offered to Joseph Cardinal Bernardin and the people of Ascension of Our Lord Parish in Evanston for allowing the principal investigator the time necessary to pursue this research.

THE AUTHORS

Dr. Charles L. Kyle is visiting research associate for Loyola University School of Education. He was granted three fellowships from Northwestern University's Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research while working on his Ph.D. His dissertation was sponsored by the National Center for Bilingual Research, Aspira Inc. of Illinois, the Mac Arthur Foundation and the Hispanic Policy Development Project, and reported that official dropout statistics reported by the Illinois State Board of Education and the Chicago Public Schools were inaccurate. Dr. Kyle's numerous task force memberships include U.S. Senator Paul Simon's Task Force on Chicago Public Schools, Illinois State Task Force on Hispanic Student Dropouts, Joint Legislative Task Force on Minority Access to Higher Education, Task Force of Chicago Public Schools on Dropout Reduction, Mayor Washington's Task Force on Youth Crime Prevention, and Cardinal Bernardin's Task Force on Gangs. Dr. Kyle holds his Ph.D. in sociology from Northwestern University.

Dr. Joyce Sween is professor of sociology and public administration in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences of DePaul Univesity of Chicago. She is a leading authority on evaluation research, statistical methodology and regression discontinuity designs. She has published more than 40 articles on the subjects of education, fertility, urbanization, bilingual education, Japanese quality circles and women's work. Her papers have been presented in West Africa, Israel, Sweden, Canada, Bulgaria, Guatemala, and Mexico. She is recognized for her computer analysis of large-scale data bases, including that of the census of the country of Cameroon, in West Africa, and of the National Science Foundation's fellowship program dealing with 200,000 science doctoral recipients. Dr. Sween has served on task forces including the U.S. Presidential Task Force on Violence for which she analyzed public reaction to the assasination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. She is currently the evaluator of a four-year high school dropout prevention demonstration project sponsored by Coca-Cola and Aspira Inc. of Illinois, and of the Hispanic Alliance Consortium for the Ford Foundation. She holds her Ph.D. in psychology and evaluation research from Northwestern University, where she was a university fellowship holder for three years.

Ms. Olga Vasquez is a graduate student in the School of Education at Loyola University. She is also a full time teacher at the Humbolt Park Community Christian School.

Table of Contents

Section	Page
I. Grade School Dropouts	1
II. Chronic Truants	2
III. Chicago Board of Education Was Advised of Grade School Dropouts in 1971	3
IV. Possible Institutional Reasons for Grade School Dropouts	5
V. Is There a Grade School Dropout Problem In Chicago?	6
VI. Homeless Children Who Are Out of School	6
VII. Experiences of Professional Educators With Early Leavers	8
VIII. Freshmen Follow-up Project Establishes Existence of Grade School Dropouts	11
IX. Students' Testimony Given in the Aspira Inc. of Illinois Study	13
X. Leave Codes	14
XI. Early School Leavers	15
XII. Grade School Dropouts - "Lost, Wherabouts Unknown"	19
XIII. Not Attacking Truancy Is Expensive	28
XIV. A Compendium of Related Studies	30

I. Grade School Dropouts

In his book, Tough Change - Growing Up on Your Own in America, author Bernard Lefkowitz (1987, New York, New York: The Free Press) talks about kids who graduate from the elementary school and "never show up at a high school." An examination of recent studies concerning dropout rates in Chicago Public Schools (Hess and Lauber, 1985, and Moore, 1985) would indicate that these studies do not include in their analyses the number youths who dropped out of school before entering high school.

Most formulas that count dropout rates are based upon measurements of the difference between ninth (9th) grade enrollment for a cohort and the number of high school graduates (12th grade) from that cohort. Since the computation of dropout rates using formulas of this type does not begin its tracking until the ninth (9th) grade, eighth (8th) graders who never enter the ninth (9th) grade are designated by the school system as "lost."

From the perspective of the grammar schools that these youngsters (early school leavers) graduated from (or were socially promoted from), the minute that these students left their schools, the youngsters no longer pertained to the grammar schools. At that point, these young former students no longer remained active in their records. Since these young people have never entered a high school, they do not exist in the high school records either. These young people are truly adrift 'somewhere' between the records of the grammar schools and the high schools.

II. Chronic Truants

Chronic truancy is a problem closely related to the grade school dropout problem. Actually, grade school dropouts are recorded as chronic truants. In

Illinois, state law mandates that students between the ages of 7 and 16 are required to attend school. The law allows a student to stop attending school only at the age of 16. For this reason, any student who leaves school before 16 years of age is recorded as a chronic truant rather than as a dropout.

Reports on dropouts from Illinois schools will not normally indicate any students who are designated as having "dropped out" before the second semester of second year high school. These early school leavers will usually be listed in official reports as "lost, cannot be found," "cannot adjust," and, "miscellaneous, such as, pregnancy," rather than as "dropouts." The reason that these younger students who have quit school are not listed as "dropouts" before the second semester of sophomore year is because the second semester of sophomore year is approximately the time that most students should be 16 years of age, and, thus, be legally eligible to be considered a "dropout."

This study will make a preliminary assessment of the magnitude of the dropout problem in the Chicago Public Schools of young people who are under 16 years of age. The study will also begin looking at possible reasons for this phenomenon. It is important to note that this study is but an initial inquiry and must be viewed only as a pilot study that may be useful in designing future research and demonstrating the need for further resources in order to conduct more comprehensive research on this topic.

III. Chicago Board of Education Was Advised of Grade School Dropouts in 1971

In 1971, Isidro Lucas conducted a study titled: Puerto Rican Dropouts in Chicago: Numbers and Motivations." His study of three predominantly Hispanic Chicago public high schools reported a dropout rate for Puerto Rican students of 71.4%. This rate was a combination of the dropout rate for those in the

eighth (8th) grade cohort who had entered high school and not finished (58.7%) combined with the dropout rate of those who never attended high school (12.5%). (Lucas, Isidro. 1971. Puerto Rican Dropouts in Chicago: Numbers and Motivations. Chicago, IL: Council on Urban Education. p. 23)

In his study, Lucas also indicated that educational professionals had been asked: "When do Puerto Rican students drop out?". He reported that 5.0% of the educational professionals interviewed said that the time that the kids dropped out was while they were in grammar school. Lucas also reported that 10.5% of the educational professionals said a very large number of Puerto Rican students who quit school, dropped out in the period after grammar school but before high school.

In an unsigned internal memo titled: "Summary and Analysis of the Lucas Research Report" (1971), a staff member for the Chicago Board of Education criticized the Lucas study stating: "this rate is a cumulative one in that it combines the percent of students graduating from elementary school and never entering high school (12.5%) with the number of students entering high school and leaving prior to graduation (58.7%)." This internal memo of the Chicago Board of Education was released in 1971 at a hearing on the dropout problem conducted by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

Unfortunately, fifteen years ago, the author of the internal memo did not recommend to the Chicago Board of Education that improved procedures for counting dropouts be initiated nor did the memo's author recommend that procedures be developed to estimate the number of students who left the school system before entering high school. At that time, more than 18 years ago, the anonymous author of the memo should have recommended to the Chicago Board of Education to assess the magnitude of the overall dropout rate from Chicago

Public Schools. Consequent to inaction at that time, the magnitude of the high school dropout problem did not come to light until Aspira Inc. of Illinois released its study of hispanic dropouts to the National Commission on Secondary Schooling for Hispanics on March 16, 1984. Aspira Inc. of Illinois indicated then that the systemwide dropout rate for Chicago Public Schools was approximately 45%.

At that same time, thirteen years after the Lucas study, the Chicago Board of Education was reporting a systemwide high school dropout rate of 7%. Later both Moore (1985) and Hess and Lauber (1985) confirmed the Aspira Inc. of Illinois findings and reported systemwide dropout rates for Chicago schools of approximately 50%.

IV. Possible Institutional Reasons for Grade School Dropouts

Mrs. Mirta Ramirez, school reform advocate, was one of the persons involved in commissioning the Lucas study. She recently reflected on reasons that she thought accounted for the phenomenon of grade school dropouts. She observed: "When kids who are behind in their studies in grade school don't go on to high school, the reason is not because they have given up. What is hurting these kids is the attitude of teachers and administrators that these kids can't make it. Havinghurst and the others have labeled these kids as being poverty kids and culturally deprived. These labels have made it too easy for some teachers to just come to school and mark time. They say: 'These kids can't be taught. Why try?'" (From personal interview given on January 26, 1989.)

Mr. James Vasquez, superintendent of San Antonio's Englewood school district, made a similar observation concerning the reasons for early dropouts in Texas schools. He noted: "The attitude that prevails now in the schools is:

'If you don't want to stay, then leave.' What the schools are really saying to these kids is: 'You make our situation better by leaving.' What really gets me is the deceit. Schools will never admit that they're encouraging the hard cases to leave. They pretend it's all the student's fault for dropping out." (Lefkowitz. 1987. p. 110.)

A California educator commented: "Of course, kids drop out, but it's not our problem. We have our hands full with the kids that are here in school. The kids on the street are someone else's problem. We just don't have the resources any more to bend over backwards and beg kids to come back to school." (Lefkowitz. 1987. p. 110.)

V. Is There a Grade School Dropout Problem In Chicago?

There are two main reasons which indicate that there may presently be a problem of grade schoolers who drop out of Chicago public schools before entering high school. The first indication of the possible existence of the problem is related to the increasing numbers of homeless families and the possibility that the children who are members of these homeless families may not be attending school. The second indication of the existence of this problem has come from personal testimony from professional educators in Chicago.

VI. Homeless Children Who Are Out of School

While there is not much written about the plight of homeless children in Chicago, we are aware that homelessness is indeed a problem for many families in Chicago. Thus, it is possible that some of the experiences that have been documented in other major cities concerning this phenomenon might also be true to some extent in Chicago.

There is evidence from other cities that a number of grade school age

children from homeless families have dropped out of school. To understand this better, it may be helpful to examine some of the findings reported by Jonathon Kozol in Rachel and Her Children - Homeless Families in America.

If the situation which Kozol describes in Northeastern American cities is true, to some extent in Chicago, it would underline the importance of tracking grade school dropouts from among the homeless population in order to develop strategies to get them back in school.

While most people are aware that homelessness is on the rise, many are not aware that some of these homeless people are school aged children. Kozol (1988)) has reported on this phenomenon in other major cities: "There are 18,000 parents with their children from 5,000 families in emergency shelters in New York. The average homeless family includes a parent with two or three children. The average child is six years old, the average parent twenty-seven. In Massachusetts, three fourths of all homeless people are now children and their parents. In some parts of Massachusetts, 90% to 95% of those who have no homes are families with children." (Ibid. pp. 4 and 5.)

Many homeless children do not enroll in school or attend school. Kozol relates: "Many (young children of homeless families) do not get into schools at all. Transient existence cuts them from the rolls." (Ibid. p. 86) Other cities do not have policies to deal with the problem of the children of homeless families. Kozol explains: "The New York Board of Education does not (have) any central policy to dictate to the schools how homeless children should be treated." (Ibid., p. 87)

A recent Traveler's Aid study of the children of homeless families in Los Angeles found that 43% of the children in their study, who were old enough to attend school, were not currently attending a school. (U.S. Conference of

Mayors. April, 1987.)

Kozol stresses the staggering social costs involved in ignoring the problems of dropouts and homeless young people. "Knowingly or not, we are creating a diseased, distorted, under-educated and malnourished generation of small children who, without dramatic intervention on a scale for which the nation seems unprepared, will grow into the certainty of unemployable adulthood. The dropout rate for the poorest children of New York (and Chicago) is 70%. For homeless kids, the rate will be much higher. None of these kids will qualify for jobs available in 1989 or 1995. But everyone who is a female over thirteen years of age is already qualified to be a mother. Hundreds will have delivered babies before their sixteenth (16th) year of life. They will not be reading books about prenatal care. When the hour of labor comes, many will not even understand the medical permission forms they sign before they are sent into anethesia. What, then, will happen to their children?

"Those who are tough-minded may berate the mothers of these children. They may lacerate their fathers for not finding the employment that does not exist, or for which those educated in the schools provided to poor people cannot qualify. No matter how harsh they are, however, how will they condemn the children? Will they accuse these children, too, of lacking the resilience to stand tall? Some of these children are so poorly nourished, their confidence so damaged, or their muscle tissue so deteriorated, that they have a hard time standing at all?" (Ibid. pp. 90-91.)

VII. Experiences of Professional Educators With Early Leavers

While official records make no mention of grade school dropouts, professional educators are quick to comment on this problem. According to Dr. Hamilton Mc Master, who was the District 6 Superintendent in the predominantly

Hispanic Humbolt Park area of Chicago, grade school dropouts are a big problem. He related: "In this district one (1) of every five (5) kids who graduates from elementary school gets lost." And, he adds, "In this district we have ten (10) attendance officers for 23,000 youngsters." (Lefkowicz. 1987. p. 109)

Mervin Mendez of Aspira Inc. of Illinois, an Hispanic educational advocacy group, has worked closely with dropouts and in alternative schools for dropouts. He said: "Many of the early leavers that I have worked with have started class in high school yet have left within the first month of school and never returned. They said that they felt uncomfortable and were bored. They had a right to be bored. They were offered very little to stimulate them. The levels of expectations of the teachers for the students and for themselves was very low. After the kids dropped out, they would remain unaccounted for or 'lost' for several months. If they were ever followed up on, it is likely that the school's truant officer would not have had contact with the missing youth until many months later. After waiting such a long period of time, it was much more difficult to negotiate a return to school for them. By the time they are contacted, it is often too late."

Mendez focused on curriculum as a critical aspect of the problem of early school leavers. "The school environments that these kids encounter is oppressive. The curriculum that they are taught is based primarily on rote learning and memorization. They are not taught to use both lobes of their brain. Take history for an example. We just teach dates and not how to think about history as a development of thought and discovery. I have taught some of the kids from the alternative school for dropouts. These kids are loaded with

creativity and love to learn if they are helped to use their mind creatively." Mendez thinks a lack truant officers contributed to the dropout problem. He said: "There is a lack of truant officers. A school like Clemente Community Academy, with an enrollment of more than 3,000 students, may have one truant officer allotted to it for only one day or one day and a half per week. Yet, on any given day, there may be 20% to 30% of the student body absent."

The grade school dropout problem does not pertain only to eighth graders who do not successfully enroll in a high school. There are youngsters in lower grades who also drop out. An attendance improvement manager for the Chicago Public Schools estimated that the number of students from all grades within the grammar schools of the Chicago Public Schools who, in the Summer of 1988, were recorded as "lost" or other similar dropout categories, was approximately 15,000 students. She said: "It is sad. If you knew the number of kids who are 15 and 16 years old and who have been out of school for 2 or 3 years and don't know where to go to get back into school, you'd cry. They aren't sure of where they begin to get back in school. They wonder if they begin by going back to their grade school or if they go should just go to a high school even though they haven't had more than five grades of education. The real sad thing is that they really have nowhere to go."

The attendance improvement manager explained that many of the alternative programs for dropouts will not work for the very early leavers. She said: "A lot of them have poor attendance in the seventh (7th) grade and then drop out before the eighth (8th) grade. Then, when these youngsters want to get back in, they can't. If they want to go to the 'Double E' alternative school for dropouts or other programs for dropouts, they have to be 16 years of age and be able to pass a 6th grade test in mathematics and reading to be eligible.

Most of them just can't do it."

She also explained the dilemma many kids face related to a new board policy of social promotion. She said: "Under the new policy, if a student is 15 before December 1 of eighth (8th) grade, they are eligible that year for graduation. If they are not at level at the time of graduation, often the principals have them attend summer school and graduate them from summer school. What happens is that some drop out before graduation and without knowing about the policy of social promotion. Then, later, the youngsters try to get into a high school but have no diploma and can't get in. No one told them that there is a diploma waiting for them at their grade school. Some principals don't even send non-achievers to summer school. They hand them the diploma and send them on. These kids are the first to drop out if they even enter the doors of a ninth (9th) grade."

"Homelessness in Chicago is presenting a whole new set of problems related to early leavers," she said. "I'm working with a family right now that is squatting in a building. The mother is not sending the kids to school. There is no light, no heat. It is snowing and cold out. If the kids were in school, at least they would be warm. There are no longer Public Aid vouchers for the Salvation Army and other shelters. It is so sad. On top of all of this, the mother has a drug problem."

VIII.

Freshmen Follow-up Project Establishes Existence of Grade School Dropouts

The Network for Youth Services (NYS) is a coalition of more than thirty community agencies who united their efforts in 1979 in order to address the causes of gang involvement and provide alternatives to gang involvement for youths from the Humbolt Park/Logan Square areas of Chicago. In 1985, NYS signed a pact with the school principals of District 6 to make dropout

prevention a joint target for their efforts. The joint project that NYS and the school principals chose to work on was called the "Freshmen Follow Up."

The project originally consisted of training community volunteers to act as deputy truant officers and visit the homes of students who were expected to be part of the freshmen class at two area high schools but who never arrived at the school. These "no shows" consisted of approximately 20% of the incoming freshmen at Wells and Clemente high schools. Training sessions for the volunteers were conducted by the staff of the Chicago Commission on Human Relations under the direction of Albert A. Raby. Dr. William Gwynn, Director of the Bureau of School Attendance for the Chicago Public Schools, coordinated the project with the Network for Youth Services and the Chicago Commission on Human Relations.

Later, other community based organizations and other schools signed on. The other participating organizations were: Aspira Inc. of Illinois, the Center for New Horizons, G.R.E.A.T., and the Better Boys Foundation. The additional schools who participated were: Austin, DuSable, Schurz, and Phillips high schools. The principals, teachers, and truant officers from the schools and the volunteers from the community groups involved were quite generous in their support and cooperation.

The results of more than 600 home visits conducted as part of the "Freshmen Follow-Up" confirmed the results of the Tables which follow. The volunteers were able to confirm that 10% of the names given to them, of eighth (8th) graders who graduated from grade school but had not arrived at high school, had truly dropped out. They were unable to locate two thirds of the names given to them. Among the reasons given for dropping out were included the following: 1) financial need, 2) poor academic performance, 3)

family problems, 4) pregnancy, and, 5) fear of gangs.

IX. Students Testimony Given in the Aspira Inc. of Illinois Study

In interviews which I conducted at two schools for a previous study, clear statements made by early leavers which reinforce the findings of the Freshman Follow Project as regards the reasons given for leaving school early. Numerous students admitted to being grade school dropouts. Often the Leave Code for these students left it unclear as to whether the student was a dropout or a truant. These verified dropouts were merely referred to in the Leave Codes as "lost." But many made statements like the following; "I quit school in May of eighth (8th) grade. I never got a grade school diploma." [Interview #4004]

Financial need was a reason that many of the early leavers gave for quitting school: "I have a job. Can't work and go to school at the same time. I dropped out to go to work." [Interview #1021] One student who dropped out in the Fall of ninth (9th) grade explained his reason for leaving school: "I had to drop out because the gangs wanted to kill me. I would like to get back in school if the gangs would let me." Another young lady who dropped out in her freshman year explained her reasons: "I dropped out in my freshman year because my husband was out of work and I wanted to be with him. I dropped out to be with my husband."

One young woman who dropped out early mentioned many reasons for this: "I couldn't cope with the classes and the problems around school. Plus, I had to work and clean and cook for the family. I always have to help my mother. Also, I was working at both Walgreens and Zayre's. I felt very discouraged in school. If I had a problem in class, there was no one to help. Not a teacher, no one. I was disappointed with the gangs and the drugs. No one cared. They

all closed their eyes from the principal, to the teachers, to the security guard. No one cared. When I dropped out, they didn't care." [Interview #2017]

X. Leave Codes

In order to determine which students have dropped out and which students are current students, it is necessary to have an operational definition of a dropout. The operational definition of a drop out for this research is: any youth belonging to the cohort of the 1897 graduating class from any elementary school with the Chicago Public Schools who neither has received a high school diploma nor is participating in a regular day time course of study to achieve a high school diploma.

When a youngster enrolls in a Chicago Public School, s/he is assigned an identification number. That number follows the student from kindergarden through high school graduation. It appears with other student information on computer listing known as the Alpha List. Part of the information contained on an Alpha List is a Leave Code for each student. If the student is a current student with the Chicago Public Schools, they are assigned a Leave Code of "00." If the person has dropped out, they are assigned a Leave Code of "64." Leave Codes other than "64" have been proven in previous studies to also mean a "dropout"(Kyle, 1984. Moore, 1985. Hess and Lauber, 1985).

The manner in which the Leave Codes can be collapsed into either "dropout" or "current student" will now be explained.

Each name on the Alpha List is followed by a Leave Code. The most commonly used Leave Codes are the following: #0 - enrolled in a school in the Chicago Public School System, #32 - transferred to a private school in Chicago, #33 - transferred to a school system outside of Chicago, #36 -

lost, cannot be found, #44 - miscellaneous, including pregnancy, #60 - found verified employment, #61 - at home, #63 - married, #64 - drop out, #65 - cannot adjust.

The Alpha List was collapsed in the following manner:

00 = enrolled in a Chicago Public School

32 transferred to private school, 33 transferred outside of Chicago area = transfer

36 lost, 44 miscellaneous and pregnancy, 60 employed, 61 at home, 63 married, 64 drop out, 65 cannot adjust = drop out

XI. **Early School Leavers**

Table 1 below indicates that there were 29,578 students who graduated from the eighth (8th) grade of Chicago Public Schools in the Spring of 1987. Of those students, approximately 9.5% (2,794) dropped out of school before the Fall of 1988.It is likely that all these students had dropped out before their 16th birthday in violation of state truancy laws.

Table 1

Eighth Graders Who Graduated From Elementary School in the Spring of 1987, and, Who Dropped Out of Chicago Public Schools Before the Fall of 1988

Student Status	Leave Code
Dropped out	9.5% (2,794)
Transferred to a Non-public school in Chicago	5.0% (1,457)
Transferred to a school outside Chicago	7.0% (2,067)
Entered a correctional institution *	0.1% (28)
Deceased *	0.1% (17)
Entered 9th Grade in Chicago Public Schools	79.5% (23,237)
Total Eighth Grade Graduates in June 1987	100.2% (29,578)

* The numbers in these categories are so small that these categories will not be reported in future tables.

From: Department of Research and Evaluation, Chicago Public Schools,

Approximately 5% (1,457) of the grade school graduates were recorded as having transferred to non-public schools in Chicago.

There are about 25 Catholic high schools in Chicago which account for about 80% of the high school students who attend non-public schools. If each of these schools received 5% of the transfers from the Chicago public grade schools (80% of 1,457 = 1195), then, each Catholic high school would have an average of 48 transfers from the public schools in each freshman class. Yet many Catholic high schools little more than 48 students in their freshman class.

Many of the Catholic high schools in Chicago have serious problems with low enrollments and are being closed for this reason. Numerous Catholic high schools in Chicago have total enrollments of approximately 200 students. These at risk schools, like the recently closed Hales Franciscan High School and Alvernia High School, may have freshman classes of only fifty (50) students. If these at risk, low enrollment (circa 200), Catholic high schools in Chicago received transfers from the public schools into their freshmen class of 5% of their freshmen class enrollment (50 students), the number of public school transfers would be equal to only two (2) or three (3) students. Clearly, the number of transfers from public schools to the at risk, low enrollment Catholic high schools is far from the projected average of 48 students per school. There are Catholic high schools in Chicago that are not at risk due to low enrollments. These schools have enrollments in excess of 1,000 students. These larger Catholic high schools in Chicago, like St. Ignatius, Resurection, Gordon Technical High School, and Mother Mc Cauley have historically drawn the vast majority of their student body enrollment from the Catholic grade school population. Their new enrollments consist predominantly

of graduates of Catholic grade schools in Chicago and the suburbs. If these Catholic high schools in Chicago had freshmen classes of 350 students and the projected average of 48 freshmen were transfers from the Chicago public schools, the new transfers from the Chicago public schools would account for nearly 14% of the freshmen classes at these larger Catholic high schools.

There is a final problem with projecting an average of 48 new freshmen transferring from the public grammar schools in Chicago to Catholic high schools in Chicago. Traditionally, Catholic high schools have recruited exclusively at Catholic grade schools. Part of the reason for this is they are generally not allowed to recruit in the public grade schools. Recently, a girls Catholic high school in Humbolt Park began recruiting at Sunday church services in the area because the local parish provided the only access available to them to graduates from the public schools. This Catholic high school which initiated this new form of recruitment of public school students has been considered successful in this experiment by other Catholic schools yet, this year, this Catholic high school has only recruited approximately 7 students (5% of their freshman class) from public grade schools.

While the number of transfers graduates from Chicago public grammar schools to non-public high schools in Chicago, as reported in Table 1, may appear to be inflated, there is no basis available to challenge it. The Office of Catholic Education (OCE) for the Archdiocese of Chicago indicated that they have no data readily available which includes such records. The OCE also indicated that they have no adequate means of measuring dropout rates as accurately as the public schools do since their students are not monitored by identification numbers while in their system. Since there is no means of verifying the accuracy of these reported transfers, the information in Table

1, derived from the Alpha Lists, must be accepted.

Table 1 also indicates that another 7% (2,067) of the eighth (8th) grade graduates were recorded as having transferred outside of Chicago. These transfers are also unverified.

In sum, 2,794 students from the eighth (8th) grade graduating class of 1987 from Chicago public grade schools dropped out before they entered the tenth (10th) grade. This 9.5% (2,794) of the grade school graduates who became early school leavers is the approximate equivalent of ninety-three (93) full classrooms of youngsters.

XII.

Grade School Dropouts - "Lost, Whereabouts Unknown"

Many people are convinced of the importance of having reliable statistics in order to monitor school reform. The latest school reform legislation in Illinois mandates thatthe Chicago Public School's performance should be monitored by an oversight body. The importance of accurate statistic gathering is most apparent when we encounter the problem of grade school graduates who drop out of school and yet are not reported as dropouts from either grade schools or high schools due to a lapse in record keeping.

Lefkowitz (1987.) comments forcefully concerning the need for comprehensive and accurate statistics on dropouts. He writes: "As long as schools are not held accountable for the students who vanish as well as the students who hang in, the dropout rate will always be underestimated. That has serious policy implications. Until full disclosure is mandated by school systems and legislators, dropout prevention efforts will continue to be directed toward a handful of 'troubled' students rather than the majority of the student body that will leave some schools before commencement day. Until the outside world learns just how many former students are out on the streets,

no substantial effort will be made to reclaim them.

"Statistically and politically, dropouts have no status today; as far as the school system is concerned, they don't exist. The only recognition that they once sat in a classroom, listened to a teacher, and read a book will be a dusty file buried in a warehouse where old records are stored. The file will be stamped: "Whereabouts unknown." (Ibid. pp. 110-111)

The most serious form of early school leaver is the graduate of grade school who never enters a high school. In Table 2, we see that 5.5% (1,633) students from the eighth (8th) grade graduating class of 1987 dropped out of school before beginning ninth (9th0 grade. This is approximately the equivalent of 54 full classrooms of students.

Table 2

Eighth Graders Who Graduated in the Spring of 1987, and,
Who Dropped Out of School
Before Entering Ninth Grade in the Fall of 1987

Student Status	Leave Code
Dropped out	5.5% (1,633)
Transferred to a Non-public school in Chicago	4.0% (1,202)
Transferred to a school outside Chicago	2.6% (760)

N= 29,578

If Lefkowitz's observations are correct, school administrators and principals are reticent to have dropouts credited to their institutions. Since many early leavers drop out in a statistical "twilight zone" between the Spring of eighth (8th) grade and the Fall of tenth (10th) grade, it may be helpful to examine whose record books they are attributed to at the time they are acknowledged as being "lost." Table 3 examines the last known location for the records of these early school leavers.

Table 3

Schools Which Reported Eighth Graders Who Graduated
in Spring of 1987
Who Dropped Out of School Before November of 1988

Student Status	Leave Code of Elementary School	Leave Code of SecondarySchool	Total
Dropped out	3.2% (941)	6.3% (1853)	9.5% (2,794)
Transferred to Non-public school in Chicago	4.0% (1202)	.9% (235)	4.9% (1,457)
Transferred to school outside Chicago	2.6% (760)	4.4% (1307)	7.0% (2,067)

N = 29,578

From: Department of Research and Evaluation, Chicago Public Schools

Table 3 shows that nearly two-thirds (1,853) of all the early leavers (2,794) were last recorded for Leave Codes by the high schools. Nearly all transfers to non-public high schools (1,202) were recorded by the grade schools while nearly two-thirds (2/3rds) of the out of state transfers were recorded by the high schools.

The problem of the early school leavers is likely to be a greater problem in some schools and some areas of the city than others. For this reason, Table 4 lists totals for early school leavers by district. In Table 4, the districts are rank ordered beginning with the districts that have the highest number of early school leavers and proceeding to the districts that have the least number of early leavers. Actually, for the past few years, high schools have belonged to districts created solely for high schools. But, for the purposes of this study, the high schools have been grouped again with the grade schools in the districts that they formerly were part of. These districts were formed using the geographical proximity of the schools to each other as the basis for their formation.

Table 4

Eighth Graders Who Graduated in Spring of 1987 and
Who Dropped Out of High School
Before Entering the Tenth Grade
(Between June, 1987 and November, 1988)
by District

Districts Ranked from Highest to Lowest Number of Dropouts

Rank Order	Early Dropouts
1 = District 6 which includes Clemente, Wells High Schools	207
2 = District 8 which includes Juarez, Collins, Manley, and Kelly High Schools	197
3 = District 13 which includes Tilden and Dusable High Schools	177
4 = District 4 which includes Schurz, Prosser, Steinmetz, and Foreman High Schools	168
5 = District 5 which includes Kelvyn Park and Orr High Schools	167
6 = District 2 which includes Senn, Sullivan, Mather, and Amundsen High Schools	162
7 = District 10 which includes Farrugut High School	153
8 = District 7 which includes Austin, Flower, and Westinghouse High Schools	140
9 = District 9 which includes Crane, Marshall, Young, and Creigher High Schools	140
10 = District 16 includes Englewood, Robeson, Calumet, Lindbloom, and Simeon High Schools	134
11 = District 14 which includes Martin Luther King, Hyde Park, and Kenwood High Schools	130
12 = District 19 which includes Harlan, Chicago Voc., and Bowen High Schools	115

Table 4 (cont.)

Eighth Graders Who Graduated in June, 1987 and
Who Dropped Out of High School
Before Entering the Tenth Grade
(Between June, 1987 and November, 1988)
by District

Rank Order	Early Dropouts
13 = District 20 which includes Carver, Fenger, Corliss, Washington, Bowen High Schools	104
14 = District 11 which includes Dunbar, Richards Voc., and Phillips High Schools	102
15 = District 17 which includes Hirsch and South Shore High Schools	102
16 = District 3 which includes Lakeview, Near North, Lane, and Lincoln Park High Schools	97
17 = District 12 which includes Gage Park, Currie, Kennedy High Schools	92
18 = District 18 which includes Julian, and Morgan Park High Schools	83
19 = District 1 which includes Von Steuben, Roosevelt, and Taft High Schools	78
20 = District 15 which includes Bogan and Harper High Schools	60
Undesignated by District	186
Total of 9.5% of 1987 Eighth Grade Graduating Class Dropped Out of School Before Beginning 10th Grade (approximately 93 classrooms of students)	2,794 of 29,578

From: Department of Research and Evaluation, Chicago Public Schools

According to a recent study of the Hispanic Policy Development Project, "The evidence point quite dramatically to the fact that many Hispanic teen-agers don't complete high school - and their failure in this regard keeps them in the lowest paid and least promising parts of the labor force." In Table 4, five of the high schools (Clemente, Wells, Juarez, Schurz, and Kelvyn Park) pertain to the five districts with the highest dropout rates for the early leavers. The percentage of Hispanic students at Clemente is 79%, at Wells is 73%, at Juarez is 95%, at Schurz is 50%, and at Kelvyn Park is 82%. Dropout rates based on a formula that begins in the Fall of the ninth (9th) grade) for these high schools as reported in 1987 were the following: Clemente = 52%, Wells = 62%, Juarez = 53%, Schurz = 54%, and Kelvyn Park = 59%. Also among the top five districts with the highest number of early leavers is District 13 which includes DuSable and Tilden high schools. DuSable has an enrollment that is 100% Black and Tilden has an enrollment that is 78% Black, 15% Hispanic, and 7% White. The dropout rate for DuSable as reported in 1987 was 69% and the dropout rate for Tilden was 59%.

The problem of early school leavers is a big problem for schools that already have high drop out rates for students. It is a problem that is especially grave for the Hispanic community.

Among the high schools in the five districts with the lowest number of early school leavers are included high schools that have some of the lowest overall dropout rates in the city. These schools are Bogan, Taft, Julian, and Morgan Park. The overall dropout rates for these schools are: Bogan = 22%, Taft = 26%, Julian = 24%, and Morgan Park = 30%. The enrollment at Bogan has 30% Black, 22% Hispanic, and 45% White; at Taft the enrollment is 27% Black, 5% Hispanic, and 63% White; at Julian the enrollment is 100% Black; and the

enrollment at Morgan Park is 69% Black, 255 White, and 5% Hispanic.

In future studies, early school leavers should be tracked by age, sex, and race. Even though the breakdown of this data by race and sex was not possible to secure for this present study, based upon the institutional data in Table 4, it appears likely that the early school leaver problem is especially grave for the Hispanic community.

XIII. Not Attacking Truancy Is Expensive

Governor George Deukmejian, when he was California Attorney General became a national expert on truancy reduction. In a report issued by his office called the "Hooky Handbook" (1982), Deukmejian makes a number of important points concerning the social costs of not providing efficient programs to promote truancy reduction.

Deukmejian contents that truancy is too often romanticized using the image of Tom Sawyer taking off of school to go fishing. Today it is too clear to educators, parents, and legislators that truancy is truly destructive. Truancy is most destructive to the self-image of the truant student. This sense of personal failure that the truant feels usually leads to acting out behavior and juvenile delinquency.

Truancy, according to Deukmejian, victimizes the community. As high as 65% of all daytime burglaries are committed by truants. Truancy victimizes the schools through loss of Average Daily Attendance (ADA) funds. It leads to frustrations in teachers, and poor performance by students. In general it harms the quality of education.

He cautions also that chronic truancy destroys kids. The chronically truant do not just "hang around." They often become the victims of pedophiles, gangs, and end up using or pushing narcotics. Serious harm and risk are

inherent in truancy.

Deukmejian urged: "Preventive action must be taken." This last remark best sums up this study.

XIV. **A Compendium of Related Studies**

****

"A Last Resort: Truancy Referrals to Juvenile Court."

Nancy Kramer Banchy

NASW School Social Work Conference, Jan./Feb., 1985

This paper, which describes the efforts made in establishing a Truancy Pilot Project in Minneapolis Public Schools, was presented at the 1985 Annual Meeting of the National Association of Social Workers. The Truancy Pilot Project was implemented using the school and the juvenile courts as resources. They both shared the belief that truancy is a "signal for attention" that must be looked into or can lead to further problems. According to Miller and Windhauser, there is a "sequence for delinquency prone students: reading retardation in elementary grades, gradual truancy in secondary grades, and delinquency as an outlet to find 'success'." In a survey done in Hannepin County, it was found that "95% of the juveniles who were treated as adults after committing serious crimes had their first contact with the courts as truants."

A truancy study was done using 85% of MPS students as a sample. The findings indicated that of 825 referrals made to the court, 50% came from junior high schools, and 79% came from single parent homes. The program was then planned to target six junior high schools and involved two elementary schools. Each school was assigned truancy intervention workers, truancy clerks and County Court Services professional case aides.

The author concluded that "court intervention may be warranted and needed," but that the "first choice should be aggressive interventions by the school, using home and community assistance."

****

"Truancy: A Review of the Literature"

Scott Birdsong

Journal of the International Association of Pupil Personnel Worker

March 1980. Vol. 24, No. 2

This article looks at various studies done and reports written regarding the compulsory attendance law, characteristics of truants and dropouts, reasons for dropping out, and alternative programs for at-risk students.

Birdsong writes that dropping out usually "precedes lengthy absences." He concludes by addressing the fact that 24.5% of the students surveyed by the Children's Defense Fund (1974) were suspended for truancy, that we need to look at what can be done to find the reasons for a student's lack of interest in school instead of keeping the student out of classes and missing assignments.

****

"Truants, Families and Schools: A critique of the literature on truancy"

David Brown

Educational Review., 1985. Vol. 55., No. 5

This study reviews the four models usually used to explain truancy: 1) the maladjusted truant; 2) families that produce truants; 3) the influence of the community; 4) the contribution made by the school.

The author finds that these models focus on individual and social illnesses caused by the "willfully perverse nature of the truant's parents." Brown suggests that these findings are based on evaluations made by teachers, researchers, and people that are not involved in the situations. He recommends that a closer look be taken at the school's contribution,

particularly teacher/student relationships.

****

Truancy Reduction: "The Hooky Handbook"

California State Office of Criminal Justice Planning

January, 1982

"The Hooky Handbook" was prepared by the California Department of Justice in order to reduce truancy in the State of California. In a message from Attorney General George Deukmejian, he states that truancy: 1) "victimizes youth" by keeping him/her from developing skills needed in adult life; 2) "victimizes the community" by contributing to juvenile delinquency ("truancy patterns have a high correlation with theft, shoplifting, vandalism and other crime-related activities;" 3) victimizes schools - low attendance brings in less funds and lowers the quality of education; and 4) "can ruin lives... truants are often targets for crime and victimization."

The following causes for absenteeism were given: illness; dislike or boredom with school; social adjustment problems; academic problems; family or personal business; influence of friends; lack of authority for enforcing attendance laws; absence of parental concern or control. Several recommendations of ways to promote early intervention were given which included the following: having a clear policy, consistent enforcement of the policy, and providing support programs. Several examples of positive support programs were outlined which included student-centered and discipline-oriented programs. The report consistently stressed that truancy is a resolvable problem..

****

"The Impact of Support for Black Adolescent Mothers"

Nancy Donohue Colletta and Diane Lee

Journal of Family Issues. March, 1983. Vol. 4, No. 10

This study was done primarily to research what impact peer, social, and family support has on an adolescent's role as a mother. The study involved 64 Black adolescent mothers: 25 were enrolled in high schools and in an infant-parent program; 25 were enrolled in high schools, but were not part of any support program; 14 were dropouts, they were neither enrolled in high school nor in any support program.

The findings indicated that high self-esteem and lower stress levels were increased in young mothers who had the support of those in her social environment. The study also indicated that a young mother experiencing this support may have a more positive outlook in life and feel more in control of her life. The study also presented the need to provide the support necessary to retain the students in school.

****

Drugs and Dropouts

A Report of the Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control

Congress of the U.S.

Washington D.C. 1986

The major conclusion of the report was that a relationship does exist between drug abuse and dropping out, especially among minority students, but no causal relationship could be determined. Special education and dropout prevention efforts are needed, and it is recommended that such efforts should do more than simply provide information. They must also address other problems associated with drugs and dropping out, such as gangs and teen-age

pregnancy. Federal action is seen as essential, and national initiations are needed in several areas: financial support for State and local prevention and education programs, programs directed toward youths with special needs; and programs that encourage communities to address drug problems."

****

Homeless Youth: The Saga of "Pushouts" and "Throwaways" in America

Congress of the U.S., Senate Committee on the Judiciary

United States Senate. 1980

This report presents a nationwide study done on homeless youth. It examines the reasons a large number of youth are homeless, the problems encountered by homeless youth, the services provided for these youth and suggested solutions to prevent youth from becoming homeless. The report also profiles various youth from different programs available to the homeless.

The report states there are different types of homeless children, "pushouts" and "throwaways." "Pushouts" are children who have left home due to some difficulties encountered at home, such as alcoholism, abusive parents, divorced parents, remarriage. These children also find that they have problems communicating with the parents. "Throwaways" are children whose parents do not want to have them in their homes any longer either because they cannot afford to maintain the children, or they give up their responsibilities for raising their children.

It was found that the number of homeless youth was increasing - 1979 figures show that out of "one to two million runaways nationally, one-fourth of them, 500,000 are homeless youth." Furthermore, the study indicated that the number of younger homeless children is increasing (the age range of homeless youth is 15-18, but several shelter programs have found a rise in

visits from 11 and 12 year olds).

Homeless youth are faced with financial as well as medical problems. Because of the difficulties in finding employment, many turn to prostitution, homosexuality or crime in order to have an income. They cannot apply for public aid or receive medical attention because of their age.

A variety of recommendations were made including teaching survival skills, changing federal regulations, and providing preventive services to families and youth.

****

"Dropout Prevention/Reduction Programs and Activities"

Dade County Public Schools

Miami, Florida - December, 1985.

This report describes 17 programs and activities that are found in elementary and secondary public schools in Dade County. These programs have been implemented, with the help of community organizations, to help prevent and reduce dropouts in Miami. Many of the programs offer skills development, academic support services, career planning, vocational training, and counseling to at-risk and high risk students. The guidebook lists the schools using the programs and the number of students participating in the programs.

****

"Optimism and Pessimism in Elementary School-Aged Children"

Mariellen Fischer and Harold Leitenberg

Child Development, 1986, Vol. 57, p. 241-248

This study was performed in Vermont with fourth, fifth and sixth graders from seven different schools in small urban and suburban cities. The students were predominantly Anglo, ages ranging from 9 to 13 years.

The students were administered tests which would determine the relationships between optimism-pessimism and self-esteem, and optimism-pessimism and peer-rated popularity, in predicting their future.

The results indicated that children were "generally optimistic and minimally pessimistic about their long-term futures." It was determined that self-esteem was related to not being pessimistic, but pessimism had very little relationship to not being optimistic about the future.

****

"Relations of Classroom Structure and Teacher Behaviors
to Social Orientation, Self-Esteem and Classroom Climate
Among Anglo-American and Mexican-American Children"
Jann Gumbiner, Spencer Kagan, George Knight
Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences. 1981. Vol. 3 No. 1.

This investigation examines the relationship of classroom structure and teacher behaviors to cooperative, competitive, and individualistic social orientation, self-esteem, and classroom climate among Mexican AMerican and Anglo-American children. Fifteen teachers were systematically observed in their classrooms, and 107 children (77 Anglo and 30 Mexican American, ages 7-11) were tested on the "Social Orientation Choice Card" (SOCC), Rosenberg's "Self-Esteem Scale," and Anderson's "My Class Inventory." Results indicate that:(a) the teachers frequently used cooperative group classroom structures, (b) teacher behaviors and classroom structures were related to social orientation and self-esteem of children in a culturally relative pattern, and (c) teacher behaviors were significantly related to positive classroom climates for both cultural groups. Results are discussed in terms of cultural relativity of the inter-relations among the school and child variables,

implications for desegregation, and the possible antecedents of the observed cultural differences.

****

"Dropouts in America: Enough is Known for Action"

A Report for Policy Makers and Grantsmakers

Andrew Hahn and Others

Institute for Educational Leadership, March, 1987.

Washington, D.C.

The authors of this report impress upon the policymakers and grant makers, the urgency of seeking and implementing solutions to America's dropout problem. The study found that the highest percent of dropouts is found among minorities and the poor in the larger cities. The report uses the following themes as a framework for their discussion: 1) targeting programs to different segments of the at-risk population; 2) responding to a child's entire life; 3) restoring confidence by persuading a confused and insecure adolescent that he/she can be competent.

The report offers opportunities for reaching out to at-risk students and actual dropouts, and recommendations on how to reform the educational system. The authors strongly encourage the participation and commitment of family, community, business, and university leaders.

****

"Affective Correlates in the Problem-Solving Process"

John C. Houtz, Toby Tetenbaum, Robert H. Phillips

The Journal of Psychology. 1981. Vol. 109

This research was done to determine the relationship between the affective traits (using self-esteem and locus of control as variables) with

the "three-stage model of problem-solving" which involves; 1) preparation; 2) production; and 3) judgment. The study involved 72 Black and Hispanic fourth, fifth, and sixth graders from an inner-city school in New York City. The researchers found that since there are significant relationships, it is important to create an environment in which certain affective styles are reinforced, such as internal locus of control and higher self-esteem. Instruction for creativity and problem solving may be more effective if programs and/or teacher efforts are directed at both skill and personality development.

****

"Citizen Guide to Children Out of School:
The Issues, Data, Explanations and Solutions to
Absenteeism, Dropouts, and Disciplinary Exclusion"
Susan C. Kaeser
Citizen's Council for Ohio Schools - September, 1984

Faced with many lost school days due to unexcused absences, school districts experiencing suspension rates as high as 21%, and 23,473 dropouts in grades 7-12 during the 1982-83 school year; the Citizen's Council for Ohio Schools studied the problems and decided to focus on finding solutions to these problems by looking at the role educators play in responding to the children's needs. One of the positions the Council takes is that if a child is excessively absent, the school must look to its practices rather than assuming that the child has a problem. The report outlines: the attendance laws for Ohio, an overview of exclusion from school (desegregation, suspension and expulsion); and dropouts.

Four reasons are stated for why children "stay away" from school: 1)

school is a low priority; 2) they experience failure in school; 3) psychological problems such as school/peer phobia; and 4) they receive little family and peer support. Several general school environment factors and society based causes were also stated as reasons students remain outside the school, such as distance to the school, and social stratification and racism. After discussing each area, a variety of solutions are suggested.

****

Compulsory Attendance Mandate Report and Preliminary Recommendations: The Age of Leaving School

Illinois State Board of Education

October, 1983

This report is one of five parts of a study done on the Illinois mandate for elementary and secondary education. This one focuses on three areas of the compulsory attendance law: 1) the entry age;) the exit age; 3) the school's responsibility for enforcing truancy regulations. The report discusses the development of the law, reasons for student's dropping out as it relates to the law, concluding with recommendations to modify the law to ensure that all students attend school.

Students are required by the state to attend school between the ages of 7 and 16, allowing the student to stop attending classes at age 16. A comparative study was done between other states' and Illinois' exit age. It was found that attendance rates decreased in the states where the exit age was lower (15) and increased in states where the exit age was higher (17).

Several conditions were cited that contribute towards the dropout problem: 1) parents are not required to be involved in a 16 year olds

decision to drop out; and 2) the lack of choices a student has if he is not performing in a regular school program.

It was recommended that the compulsory attendance law be modified as follows: 1) hold parents or guardians legally responsible for their child to be in school until: a) the age of 18; b) the student receives a high school diploma or its equivalent; 2) that if a student leaves at age 16, he/she must enter an "optional educational program" and that he/she must have: a) parental permission; b) discussed the decision in a conference with parents and school officials; and c) registered in an optional program; 3) If the recommendations are implemented, they should be monitored with reports sent to the State Board and the General Assembly; and 4) provide optional educational opportunities to the students.

****

"Making It the Hard Way: Adolescents in the 1980's"

Joan Scheff Lipsitz

October 27, 1983

The following summarizes testimony presented by the author to the Crisis Intervention Task Force of the House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families. The author began her presentation with a statistical overview of the major problems affecting our youth today: 1) dropout - it is estimated that 13% of 18-21 year olds (1/3 of the Blacks and 1/2 of the Hispanics) in Illinois did not graduate from high school; 2) drugs - percentages are going down, but the numbers are still high; 3) juvenile crime - adolescents are also victims of crime... study found that seventh grade boys are the most victimized; 4) teen-age suicide - fastest growing rate of any age group; 5) runaways - more than 2 million every year.

Lipsitz suggested that since adolescents are "extremely vulnerable to external forces" we may be encouraging them to "fulfill our worst expectations" by our negative portrayal of them through the media. She also states that it is during their adolescence that children are striving for achievement and competence, and that they are "shaking in self-esteem."

It was also found that many adolescents are left alone due to the rising number of working parents. Lipsitz makes a case for after-school centers that would be available to students who have nothing to do from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

****

"Born Losers: School Dropouts and Pushouts"

Wayne Mahood

NASSP Bulletin. January, 1981. v. 65., n. 441

This article reports the economic impact that dropouts have on others. Mahood profiles two teens from the same community, one still in school, the other a dropout. He then looks at the economic and social results of a dropout. Mahood gives estimates of the the billions of dollars that will be lost in tax revenues or expended in welfare as a result of the nationwide dropout problem.

Mahood concurs with researchers that the "most significant cause of dropping out of school is poor reading ability" which leads to withdrawal from school due to feelings of failure. He recommends that the schools help by: 1) individualizing classes and caring for students; 2) helping students develop positive self images; 3) identifying students with handicapping conditions; 4) providing in-school suspensions for disruptive students; 5) recognizing student's rights in schools.

Mahood stresses that if we take time to help these students, we would perform a service that may well reap economic benefits for everyone.

****

"Levels of Cultural Knowledge and Self-Esteem of Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Grade Participants in a Philippine Ethnic Heritage Curriculum Conducted in Guam Catholic Schools."

Etta B. Miller

Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1982.

In this study, Filipino students living in Guam received instruction from an experimental program, "The Phillipine Ethnic Heritage Curriculum," to determine whether cultural knowledge and self-esteem would increase. The two units, taught over a 10-week period, included Phillipine stories, legends, myths, and the Filipino's experiences with emigration, immigration and assimilation. The control group was taught from a traditional curriculum. After administering the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, and the Test of Cultural Knowledge, it was found that the experimental group "scored significantly higher on both tests than did the control group."

Miller indicated that self-esteem is crucial to successful life experiences, and there are three factors (Dembo, 1977) that develop a child's self-esteem: 1) "physical growth and development;" 2) "child rearing practices;" and 3) "school experiences." A problem encountered by minority students in learning a new culture is that some tend to over-acculturate, causing conflicts in the home and rebellion against authority, and some under-acculturate, whereby a student tends to withdraw.

Miller stresses the need to help students develop a positive self-image by providing opportunities to positively identify with family, neighborhood,

institutions, country, and the world.

****

"Children, Families, and Public Schools:
Building Community Alliances for Learning."
National Education Association
February, 1985

This report summarizes the sessions of a conference held in Washington by the National Education Association. The conference addressed issues that hinder a student's ability to learn and offered ways in which family, schools, and communities can work together in order to improve the situation for our students.

The following themes were discussed: 1) hunger and nutrition; 2) child abuse and neglect; 3) overcoming racial, cultural and economic alienation; 4) missing children, runaways, teenage suicides and pregnant students; 5) latchkey problems; 6) drug and alcohol abuse; 7) special needs of children; 8) maintaining cultural identity in school integration; 9) overcoming the school obstacle course: testing, screening and tracking; 10) bringing families into the teaching-learning process; 11) reporting problems and identifying resources for assistance; 12) opening new technology to minorities and women; and 13) early childhood education. The report also outlines planning models that the participants came up with as they worked in small groups to discuss the problems and sought possible solutions.

****

"Hi, Your Kid Cut Class Today. At the Tone..."
National School Boards Association, Washington, D.C.
Executive Educator, August, 1984. Vol. 5, No. 8

This document gives the text of a recording that can be used via computer to place calls to parents when their child has not been in school. The computer is programmed to make the call in the evening, and if the call is not answered, the computer will place two more calls later in the evening. The following morning, a printout will indicate the names of parents who received the calls and those that did not. When this method of informing parents was first tried at two schools that had high absenteeism, "attendance increased from 78.8% to 85.6%." Although the system is expensive ($7,800), schools believe the computers will pay for themselves in increased state aid due to increased attendance rates.

****

"Safe School Overview"

National School Safety Center

Sacramento, CA, February, 1986

This paper stresses the importance of creating a safe school environment for learning and looks at the problems affecting learning today. These include, "crime, violence, drugs, suicide, child abuse, and lack of discipline." The authors express their concern about the high national drop-out rate and their results: unemployment, "dead-end jobs," and public assistance. They call upon national leaders to become involved in providing safer schools to children.

****

"Increasing Positive Self-Referent Statements to Improve Self-Esteem in Low-Income Elementary School Children."

Robert H. Phillips

Journal of School Psychology 1984, Vol. 22., pp. 153-163

The study conducted by Phillips used as its subjects 30 Black and Puerto Rican children from the third, fourth, and fifth grade classes of a low-income elementary school in New York. The purpose of the study was to have the children increase positive statements about themselves in order to increase their self-esteem.

In the course of the experiment, teachers were trained to reinforce positive statements made by the students by responding with comments such as, "I'm proud of you too;" "Yes, you did do well;" "That's excellent thinking," etc. The study found that not only did the experimental group's positive statements increase, but there was also an increase in positive statements made about themselves in the control group.

****

"The Impact of Grade Retention on the Social Development of Elementary School Children"

Diane Loretta Plummer

Master's Thesis, University of Georgia, 1982.

Plummer conducted this study using as a sample, 219 students from an elementary school in rural Georgia: 34% African-American and 65% Caucasian American. Plummer studied the effects of promotion and retention in grades two and five by looking at measures provided by the students for peer reward allocations, social partner preferences, task partner preferences, impression and attitudes about the school environment, report card expectancy, and self esteem measures.

After analyzing the results, Plummer suggested that there is a high relationship between academic performance and social adjustment. Several conclusions were made: 1) the retained child was discriminated against; 2)

the retained child received less rewards even when his/her work was equal to non-retained child; and 3) the retained child was not preferred as a partner for school tasks.

****

"The Association of Dropout Rates with Student Attributes"

Matthew E. Schulz

Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association

San Francisco, California. April, 1986

This study was done using a sample of over 75% of 1978, 1979, 1980 freshmen enrolling in Chicago public high schools. The study was performed in order to determine whether the attributes of dropouts (attributes used were reading achievement, entry age, sex and race) were associated with their dropping out.

It was found that among Blacks and Hispanics, low reading achievement and entry age can be attributed to their dropping out. The authors suggested that the dropout rates among minorities can be "as low as whites" if their reading achievement is "comparable." Several recommendations were made: 1) provide a prevention policy that would increase the reading achievement without retention before entering high school, and 2) "provide a policy that would promote the entry of students into high school at an earlier age."

****

"The Origin and Evolution of Social Work in the Schools"

Michael W. Sedlak

National Institute of Education, Washington, D,C., April, 1981.

In this paper, Sedlak traces the beginnings of social work in the schools

and the periods where functions of school social work changed.

Social work was introduced to the schools in the early 1900's (1900-1920). The purpose of social work programs were three-fold: 1) prevention and reduction of truancy and delinquency; 2) provision of services to poor and dysfunctional families; 3) facilitate the transition of foreigners into the American society. These services were originally provided by "visiting teachers" from private and community organizations.

Influenced by a state funded pilot program in New York City, educational leaders "pressed" the legislature to provide social services through the educational institutions in the 1930's. But in the 1950's, the social services activities shifted from "reform" to clinical activities. With the increased involvement of the federal government in the 1960's came further changes in social work in the schools. Social services were being subcontracted through private agencies in addition to having school- based social workers. Several reasons were given: 1) agencies employed minority counselors that could work with minority students; 2) schools were able to establish relationships with neighborhood agencies; 3) easier to continue programs if funds were to be removed. This practice also limited the functions of the school-based social worker.

Sedlak concludes that although schools may have agreed to 'house' such programs, they never really 'adopted' them.

****

"Student Absenteeism: Explanations, Problems, and Possible Solutions"

Cynthia T. Traux

Exit Project of Indiana University at South Bend. April, 1985

This report takes a look at student absenteeism through various

annotations of articles on the problem and possible solutions. Some explanations given for student absenteeism are: the lack of compulsory attendance laws; student's attitudes toward authority; lack of parental control; the teaching styles; low reading achievement and low grades.

Traux reports that in 1972, the Los Angeles Police Department conducted a study and found a "drop in crime (30% in daytime burglaries, 75% in auto thefts) when truants were apprehended and turned over to school officials." The following were also recommended as possible solutions to prevent absenteeism: form truancy task forces involving the community; have an attendance clerk who would be in contact with the students, teachers and parents; develop a study skills programs; have structured attendance policies; involve parents.